

‘Prayers for Places’ website background

This project comes from the idea that this is God’s world, and it makes as much sense to pray outside church as it does to pray inside church. In this project, prayers are associated with places, and in most cases a photograph is provided too. The prayers can be used in the actual places, or at home. There is meaning in the feeling that someone else has been to this place before and has made a prayer connected with it. The website is still changing and suggestions for improvement are always welcome.

There is a mixture of ‘I’ prayers and ‘we’ prayers here. Praying is in some sense together with other people, even when they are not in the same room. Remember it’s ‘our’ father.

Where do the prayers come from?

The website is made by Bob Warwicker, and the prayers and photos are from him and Janet Lees, both retired ministers, along with a couple of Psalm texts (NRSV). In principle, anyone can create a prayer if they have a name and a password, but at this stage that is true only of Janet and Bob.

It would be great if in due course this site could be scaled up, if it were worthwhile. However a couple of issues are holding this up.

- One is a question about the site itself – see [Appendix](#).
- Secondly, it would be really great if other people contributed, but how is this to be moderated (assuming people were willing to contribute)? Neither of us is very comfortable standing in judgement over other people’s prayers, but there probably are limits to what can be said and what can’t be said.

How are the prayers written?

All the photographs are by Janet or Bob, some recent and some older. Some of the older pictures do not have location information, and there’s been a bit of research in working out latitudes and longitudes. Sometimes the location is uncertain or approximate, and if so this is noted with the prayer.

The prayers are written in several ways;-

- Some are written on the spot. The software allows us to go to a place, write the prayer and take the picture there and then. There is also a version of this in which the photograph and text are noted at the time and the prayer is added back at home.
- Some prayers are written for a place that one or both of us have been in the past. The photo is taken from our store, and the words of the prayer are added.
- Some prayers are taken from particular projects we have done, for which prayer texts already exist, such as previous sabbaticals, Janet’s End to End walk in 2019, sections of Transpennine Trail and other pieces of walking we have done.

Almost all of the places have been visited *on foot*. Walking gives you a unique way of ‘knowing’ a place.

Therefore, the prayers are concentrated around Janet and Bob’s home turf in the part of Derbyshire which is almost Manchester.

The future

There are a number of future aims, with varying degrees of vagueness, doability and urgency;-

- Add place names to the prayers. [done late July 2020]

- Think about including other contributors, and make the process more friendly.
- Tidy up or even re-think the website.
- Continue to add prayers, moving a bit further away from home. It is good if there are clusters of prayers such that several can be visited in one walk.

Using the website

There are instructions on the website, but basically you can either use the prayers at home, or use them ‘in the field’ on a mobile device with location capabilities.

How can you help?

- By offering suggestions for improvement.
- If you wish to suggest a prayer, please send us the text and (preferably) a photo with the location embedded in it (most smartphones can do this).

In either case, please email us on pfp@bojanet.org.uk

Appendix – coding issues...

One issue about possible expansion is ... how scalable/maintainable is the actual code? The current coding behind the website, like Topsy, ‘just grewed’, new bits being added as Bob found out how to do them, rather than being planned systematically. It is undercommented and not very friendly. Certain bits may need to be re-thought on performance grounds, and maybe the whole thing needs the attention of a professional.